United Nations S/PV.5346

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5346th meeting

Monday, 16 January 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Mahiga	(United Republic of Tanzania)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Olson

Agenda

Briefing by the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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06-20797 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Karel de Gucht, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to Mr. Karel de Gucht, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, and invite him to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Karel de Gucht, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

I now give the floor to Mr. De Gucht.

Mr. De Gucht (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, and all other members of the Security Council for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to speak before the Council on behalf of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). As of 1 January, Belgium has exercised the presidency of the OSCE. In assuming that function, Belgium has clearly demonstrated its commitment to multilateralism and international cooperation.

The OSCE is a regional organization under the terms of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. It played a crucial role in bridging the gap that divided Europe during the cold war. Since then, it has developed a set of commitments, norms and principles that links all its members. That constitutes the essence of modern collective security in the broadest sense of the term. In that connection, I reaffirm our profound commitment to those common principles, shared by the United Nations.

Following 2005, a year of many challenges, the OSCE's contribution to peace and security in Europe, through its cross-cutting mandate, is better recognized. The OSCE is now in better shape than it was at the beginning of last year. The Ljubljana Ministerial Council in December provided an opportunity for renewed dialogue and better understanding. Thus, Belgium is shouldering its new responsibilities with optimism.

Allow me, Mr. President, to outline the main points of the programme of our chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

First, we will play an active role in the institutional reform of the OSCE. At the Ljubljana Ministerial Council, agreement was reached on a review of the scale of assessments and on a road map for the institutional reform of the OSCE in order better to adapt it to the current challenges. That road map signals the areas where negotiations on reform should be carried out under the Belgian chairmanship. We attach great importance to that task, and we will take it very seriously. It is my intention to appoint a high representative of my administration to carry out that process.

Secondly, Belgium will strive to achieve a better balance among the three aspects — political-military, economic and human — of the OSCE's comprehensive security approach. Belgium will strive to strengthen the economic and environmental aspect while stressing regional cooperation and transportation security.

Indeed, security is never finally achieved. It requires constant attention, ongoing investment and shared responsibility. The changes that have occurred since the creation of the OSCE have been enormous and, for the most part, positive. The risk of a conflict encompassing the European continent as a whole has disappeared. But security and stability in Europe remain among the main concerns of the OSCE. There can be no democracy without stability. Conversely, peace and security require respect for democracy, for civil liberties and for human rights. There is no lasting stability without economic development.

With respect to transportation and the strengthening of the economic aspect, the Belgian chairmanship intends to draw attention to the special situation of landlocked countries. We intend to cooperate with the United Nations High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and to help implement the United Nations Programme of Action adopted at Almaty in 2003. We also intend to strengthen cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to promote the implementation of juridical norms and instruments.

Thirdly, a central place will be given to combating international crime and promoting the rule of law. Transnational crime is, together with terrorism, one of the most serious new threats to our societies. The magnitude of this threat was recognized in the outcome document of the September 2005 United Nations summit. It is also a problem of concern to our citizens.

The fight against organized crime is not a new subject for the OSCE, as attested by its plans and actions against human trafficking, the illicit trade in drugs and weapons and the laundering of funds derived from criminal activities and corruption. The OSCE has instruments to strengthen the rule of law and to train police and justice personnel. Our chairmanship wishes to build on those achievements, to give new impetus to OSCE work in this area and to introduce some new ideas. In the fight against organized crime, the 2002 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, called the Palermo Convention, is the international legal instrument par excellence. The OSCE offers a useful framework for promoting its ratification and providing specific support for its implementation by OSCE participating States.

Fourthly, Belgium will strive to contribute to conflict prevention and crisis management. More specifically, we will devote attention to Kosovo and to what we call the frozen conflicts in Moldova-Transdniestria, Nagorny Karabakh and Georgia-South Ossetia. The OSCE itself has neither the mission nor the means to impose a solution. It can, however — and this is its mission — supervise and facilitate the emergence of a solution if the will to negotiate really exists on the part of the main parties concerned.

The question of Kosovo will be given special attention by the Belgian chairmanship. Today, the OSCE mission in Kosovo is the largest of all OSCE missions, with 1,600 persons on the ground throughout Kosovo, including in villages and regions where members of the Serb minority live. In cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the OSCE mission is carrying out an important task related to the reconstruction of Kosovo. Its work focuses mainly on protecting minorities, decentralization, democratization, promoting human rights, elections, police training and supporting the administration.

Under the Belgian chairmanship, the future role of the OSCE mission in Kosovo will be assessed. UNMIK plans to gradually end its presence, which will lead to the transfer of tasks and competencies to other organizations, including the European Union and the OSCE. In-depth dialogue and close cooperation among the United Nations, the European Union, the OSCE, NATO and other main actors will be essential for success in Kosovo. The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has appointed Mr. Martti Ahtisaari as Special Envoy charged with leading the process of Kosovo's final status. The OSCE will be called upon to help implement the final status. Therefore, it is important that from the outset it be able to fully play its role among the international bodies concerned.

In Moldova, the OSCE is playing an important role in the mediation and determination of Transdniestria's future status. During its OSCE chairmanship, Belgium intends to make a constructive contribution to the status negotiations.

In 2005, we witnessed a rapprochement between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the question of Nagorny Karabakh. The Belgian OSCE chairmanship intends to contribute actively to the peace process and to the Minsk Group's efforts to ensure that that rapprochement can be translated into a settlement of the conflict in 2006.

In Georgia, the United Nations is playing a central role in efforts aimed at conciliation with Abkhazia. With regard to South Ossetia, such a central role is being played by the OSCE. We hope that the recent progress can pave the way for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In parallel, the OSCE is now conducting an economic needs assessment. The

Belgian chairmanship is prepared to organize, if necessary, a donors conference in 2006.

The OSCE is also very active in the area of democratization. Electoral observation is an important instrument in that regard, even if it is sometimes challenged. I am convinced of the usefulness of this work and intend to ensure, as Chairman-in-Office, that observer missions can continue to carry out the tasks for which they were created: to contribute in an impartial manner to democratic development. As OSCE Chairman, I believe it is the duty of member countries to make full and timely use of existing instruments designed to guarantee the transparency and reliability of electoral processes. As Chairman-in-Office, I appeal to the Government of Belarus to invite the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to observe the upcoming presidential elections.

Those are the priorities of our OSCE chairmanship, but our programme has a broader scope. We will also pursue and develop the OSCE's other major areas of concern. I am thinking in particular of tolerance and non-discrimination or combating human trafficking. In the context of the OSCE's politico-military aspect, we will organize a major seminar in February 2006 concerning military doctrines.

With regard to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the OSCE just adopted, at the Ministerial Council held in Ljubljana, a decision committing it to monitor the implementation by all its member States of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Furthermore, we are actively engaged in combating the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons; our actions are in accordance with the United Nations Programme of Action.

We will also devote particular attention to the link between the environment and security. To that end, we will strive to promote the Environment and Security Initiative, which brings together the United Nations, the OSCE and NATO in plans to destroy dangerous products.

Finally, terrorism is recognized by the United Nations and the OSCE as one of the most significant new threats. The OSCE Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism is part of the universal framework of United Nations conventions and General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. OSCE members are committed to ratifying and implementing United Nations conventions and protocols. Within the OSCE secretariat, the Action against Terrorism Unit has the mission of supervising the implementation of existing United Nations instruments and providing technical assistance to member States in the fight against terrorism. The Belgian chairmanship intends to continue making progress on the basis of the OSCE Plan of Action and to promote cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations, particularly the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee.

The United Nations and the OSCE share the same values. The two organizations work in many common areas, including such important fields as respect for human rights, democratization, the protection of minorities, conflict prevention, crisis management, combating organized crime, fighting terrorism and protecting the environment.

I would also like to assure the Security Council of our full support for the principles and recommendations contained in resolution 1631 (2005) — adopted last October — which aim to strengthen cooperation and consultation between the United Nations and regional organizations while at the same time recognizing the primary responsibility of the Security Council for international peace and security. As Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Belgium will endeavour to further promote synergies and complementarity between the United Nations and the OSCE. It is for that reason that I wished to brief the Council about the activities of the OSCE at the beginning of our chairmanship.

That is the outline of a programme that is both ambitious and realistic. It is ambitious because it opens up numerous new avenues for the OSCE while expanding the scope of others. It is realistic because we are aware that progress will only be possible through agreement among the OSCE's 55 member countries. As Chairman-in-Office, we intend to play the role of honest broker, working in the best interests of the organization as a whole and for the benefit of all its members. Good cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations is crucial in that regard. In its capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Belgium wishes to contribute to that goal. We intend to meet the challenge. I look forward to the support and cooperation of the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. De Gucht for his briefing.

As there is no list of speakers, I invite Council members who wish to make comments or to address questions to the Chairman-in-Office to so indicate to the Secretariat as of now.

I shall now give the floor to those who have indicated their wish to speak.

Mr. Duclos (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to say at the outset that it is a great pleasure for me to greet the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium in his capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It is a pleasure first of all because France and Belgium have very close ties; in fact, I would say that there are very deep affinities between our two countries. It is also a pleasure because my country is committed to the OSCE. Moreover, a number of our diplomats have left their mark on the history of the OSCE. We are very pleased that Mr. Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, a compatriot of ours, is the current Secretary General of the OSCE.

Why is the relationship between the OSCE and the United Nations, the issue that brings us here today, important? First of all, may I say — perhaps by way of background, but I nevertheless think it useful to mention — that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is a model of a bold and innovative approach to diplomacy. Those of us who still remember the days of East-West division — and especially of the division that existed in Europe at the time of that major ideological conflict — also recall the Helsinki Final Act. The Final Act represented a diplomatic revolution for numerous reasons, but for two reasons in particular.

First, the Final Act was a successful exercise in constructive ambiguity. For us as diplomats, that is worth taking note of, given the great usefulness of constructive ambiguity. It should be said that that was possible thanks to people themselves, who were able to grasp the potential of the work done by Governments and diplomats.

The Helsinki Final Act was also important in another respect: it was the first time that human rights emerged as a major element in and of themselves vis-à-vis relations among States. It was also the first time that the now-fundamental idea was voiced that there was something beyond States and sovereignty, namely, human rights.

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, as the OSCE was then known, took another diplomatically bold step by reinventing itself after the fall of the Berlin wall. That too is a lesson that bears learning. The same protagonists, along with new members, were able to adopt new permanent structures and to reorient the very mission of the organization. It was no longer just a matter of trying to overcome division; the organization also had to establish and expand common values. But the OSCE did not stop with that achievement: some time ago — like the United Nations — it undertook a reform effort to better adapt itself to the challenges of Europe today.

The relationship between the United Nations and the OSCE is important for other reasons that have to do with the agendas of our respective organizations. As Mr. De Gucht has pointed out, the OSCE is currently working in the area of conflict prevention and crisis management. Members of the Council will have noted that the various situations to which the Minister referred do not overlap exactly with those being dealt with by the United Nations. Kosovo, however, is one of the major issues we share; and we of course hope that our two organizations will carry out the necessary coordination and cooperation in that regard.

In other areas, however, the OSCE deals with matters that have been referred to as frozen conflicts. We should recall that, although Europe may appear to be a very fortunate and stable region as compared with other continents, it nevertheless harbours areas of tension — often deep-rooted and long-standing. It is to the OSCE's credit that it is dealing with those crises. It is proper that they are being addressed by a regional organization, and not being transferred to the United Nations. That is a good division of labour that we should maintain.

On the other hand, if we consider the thematic aspects of the agendas of our respective organizations, we can see that they overlap to a very significant extent. One of the basic purviews of the OSCE is human rights, which are, of course, a major concern of the United Nations.

Arising out of the issue of human rights are those of democratization and the monitoring of elections, which the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium duly addressed in his statement. Those are tasks and processes with which we in the United Nations, and particularly in the Security Council, are frequently

involved in the context of managing post-conflict situations.

The Minister referred to the rule of law, which has been a major concern of the Security Council for some years now. He spoke of the fight against organized crime. I am aware that there has been very practical cooperation between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the OSCE, both of which are headquartered in Vienna.

I also note that, with respect to the fight against intolerance, racism and anti-Semitism, the United Nations might usefully be inspired by the work that has been done in those areas by the OSCE. The same goes for the struggle against human trafficking, which the OSCE has only recently begun to address but which has already yielded fruit. The issue is an extremely important and painful one, on which more active cooperation would be most useful.

In brief, it is clear that my country strongly supports the Belgian chairmanship of the OSCE. With his usual modesty, Mr. Karel de Gucht noted that Belgium intends to be an honest broker. We feel sure that it will be much more than that. It can also count on our support in strengthening the ties between the United Nations and the OSCE, particularly in the areas that I have outlined.

Mr. De Gucht is here representing both Brussels, the capital of the European Union, and Vienna, which is certainly the secret capital of Europe in its broadest sense, which includes America and Central Asia. We are fully confident that, in Brussels and in Vienna, Belgium will successfully discharge the important mandate entrusted to it this year.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): Like the previous speaker, we wish to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, in his capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for his briefing.

We acknowledge the instrumentality of the OSCE in the process of mending the schisms of the cold war and its potential, through its commitments, norms and principles, to effectively contribute to the quest for global peace and security. We are therefore heartened by its commitment to restoring balance amongst its security, economic — including environmental — and humanitarian activities.

We also welcome the Chairman-in-Office's priority concerns, especially in the area of continuing the institutional reform of the OSCE, in order to strengthen the organization in the face of new challenges and threats to security, which is similar to what we are all dealing with at the United Nations now. The problems of human rights, trafficking in human beings, terrorism and crime are of concern to all States Members of the United Nations.

The rights and concerns of minorities have been the bane of democracies and generated conflicts in many areas of the world, not only in Africa, but also in certain areas of Asia and Europe. We recognize that the OSCE has considerable experience in national minority issues, and we hope that that rich experience will be brought to bear in resolving some of the frozen conflicts arising from minority issues in its areas of operation. In that regard, we welcome the Chairman-in-Office's planned visit to Armenia and Azerbaijan with a view to contributing to the successful resolution of the future of Nagorny Karabakh. In the same vein, we hope that his announced visit to Kosovo will contribute to ensuring that the OSCE plays its expected role on the future status of Kosovo.

We hope that the OSCE will also take advantage of the endorsement by the world summit of the need for enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, and strengthen its links with the United Nations as a whole, and especially with the Security Council.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): First of all, I would like to thank Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht for his insightful and informative statement. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to wish Belgium a very successful term as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

We welcome the priorities of the Belgian OSCE programme, as defined by the Chairman-in-Office, and its focus on rebalancing the OSCE's three dimensions by strengthening the economic dimension without weakening the human and politico-military dimensions. That approach fully conforms with the conclusions of the world summit about the mutually reinforcing and interlinked pillars of the United Nations system and foundations for collective security.

In reaction to Foreign Minister De Gucht's statement, I would like to stress three points.

First, the OSCE has played an important role in turning Europe into an area of peace and stability, and we believe that it is still needed in order to consolidate the achievements of the 30 years since the Helsinki Final Act was adopted. We agree that there is a need for the institutional reform of the OSCE in order to strengthen its capability to face new challenges and threats to security.

There is a certain similarity between the United Nations and OSCE, and not only in that area.

The priorities of the Belgian OSCE programme — such as the advancement of the rule of law, the fight against terrorism, defining a global and coherent approach to combating organized crime, new ways to strengthen mechanisms of non-proliferation and disarmament, and so on — coincide with the priorities of the United Nations and its Security Council for building a more stable and secure world.

The commonality of goals and challenges makes cooperation between those two organizations even more relevant and urgent. In that connection, it is important to note that the world summit has given new backing to efforts to strengthen cooperation and interaction between the United Nations and regional organizations. So as not to waste scarce resources, that cooperation should be based on the principles of complementarity of action, the pooling of resources and the proper division of labour.

We think that it is important for both organizations to strengthen their dialogue and interaction. Better communication should be achieved through liaison officers and regular consultations on matters of common interest at all appropriate levels, including that of the Chairman-in-Office.

Secondly, throughout the years of its existence, the OSCE has accumulated enormous potential and expertise in the area of institution-building, confidence-building, election monitoring, and the protection of human and minority rights. We believe that its valuable post-conflict and transformation know-how may be truly inspiring for other regional organizations. In our opinion, it could also be better utilized and reflected in the work of United Nations agencies and institutions, including the future work of the newly established Peacebuilding Commission.

Last but not least, we particularly appreciate the special attention paid by the Chairman-in-Office to the issue of so-called frozen conflicts in Moldova, Nagorny Karabakh and Georgia, as well as to developments in Central Asia and to post-conflict stabilization in the western Balkans, including the issue of the future status of Kosovo. That is another important area for cooperation and interaction between the United Nations and the OSCE.

We share the appreciation expressed for the work that the OSCE has done and is still doing in Kosovo. We expect the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, which is a component of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, will remain focused on the issues of democratization, respect for human and minority rights, freedom of the media, elections, the training of law enforcement authorities and the functioning of democratic institutions, to which Mr. De Gucht referred in his statement.

The OSCE should continue to play its important role in the area of implementing standards for a democratic and tolerant society in Kosovo. In our opinion, that will be a major factor influencing the whole process of defining the future status of Kosovo. In this connection, I would like to ask Mr. De Gucht to elaborate a little further on the objectives of the Belgian chairmanship regarding the OSCE's activities aimed at making progress in the settlement of frozen conflicts and on the future of the OSCE mission in Kosovo in the context of the ongoing future status talks.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I would like to welcome the Foreign Minister of Belgium and to thank him for having made the effort to come to New York to brief us today on the comprehensive programme of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for 2006. It is a particular pleasure for me to welcome him here, and not just because our countries have close relations: it happens also that I studied in Belgium.

It is true that he will have to confront a great many challenges in the coming 12 months. It sounds from what we have heard today that the OSCE is ready to tackle all of the problems and challenges facing it with renewed effort, fresh ideas and sincere commitment. We wish Mr. De Gucht success and hope that his efforts will be rewarded. The OSCE, given its important role and unique cross-dimensional mandate, certainly deserves that. He will certainly have the full support of Greece.

Thirty years after the Helsinki Final Act and the creation of what is now the OSCE, Europe is a new continent, broadly at peace and fully engaged in the development of new cooperative structures. The contribution of the OSCE as the largest regional organization on security, encompassing and joining countries from Vancouver to Vladivostok, has been central in the construction of the new European security architecture, as well as in ensuring the protection of human rights and addressing many other issues to which other speakers have referred in detail.

Over the past few years, the OSCE has been trying to redefine itself in order to better adapt to a fast-changing and ever more complex environment, and that accounts for the recent difficulties that the organization has had to face. Despite those difficulties — or perhaps because of them — one thing has become clear, especially in the past year: the OSCE has not outlived its usefulness, and ongoing concerns about questions of stability and security in the whole of Europe make clear that there is still a need for a strong, efficient regional organization that has successfully reinvented and reoriented itself. A pertinent example of that is the extensive experience and important input of the OSCE in the Balkans. Its activities cover the fields of institution-building, good governance, the rule of law and election monitoring.

It goes without saying that the cooperation of the OSCE with the United Nations in various crisis areas contributes not only to peace and stability, but also to a better division of labour, which can have only positive results.

In closing, I would like to ask the Belgian Chairman-in-Office a number of questions. He mentioned that the three main dimensions of the OSCE have so far received unequal treatment, and that during his chairmanship he intends to deal more substantively with the economic and environmental dimensions. I would like to ask him what that would encompass. Are there more detailed plans for achieving such a rebalancing? How would the targets be better defined? By what practical means would the goal be achieved? I would be grateful for more details.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like first of all to thank the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht, for his briefing on the priorities of his organization for 2006. I would like to recall the statement that his predecessor made to the Council last year regarding the work under way to adapt the organization to the new security challenges (see S/PV.5134). We were pleased to hear today that the institutional reforms are continuing and that one of the priorities of the Belgian chairmanship-in-office will be to balance the various aspects of the OSCE agenda by strengthening the economic dimension and according equal attention to the human and political-military dimensions.

In this context, we believe that it was important to emphasize that peace and stability must be based on the principles of respect for democracy, civil liberties and human rights, and that it is not possible to achieve sustainable stability without according priority to economic development.

We believe that it is crucial to highlight the organization's work in encouraging and promoting the rule of law and defending and promoting human rights, particularly in countries and regions where there have been armed conflicts in the past. Kosovo, Georgia, Moldova and Nagorny Karabakh are some of those areas where the OSCE is involved and is working efficiently.

We would also like to highlight the organization's role in combating organized crime and countering terrorism, as I was able to see for myself in September when I visited in my capacity as Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999). We believe that those are two priorities for the organization and, through Mr. De Gucht, we would like to commend the Secretary General of the organization for the efficient work being done in both of those areas.

Mr. De Gucht also spoke of his organization's role with respect to the future status of Kosovo — one of its priorities for 2006. We agree with him that the OSCE can play a key role within the context of negotiations, and it will continue to be an important element in the international presence in Kosovo.

We were pleased also to hear of the Minister's plans to visit the region next February, and we welcomed his announcement that he would be in close contact with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Martti Ahtisaari, in order to ensure active participation of the OSCE.

Lastly, we would like to hear how the Minister views the future role of the OSCE and how it will be coordinated with the work of the other organizations involved in that process.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): It gives me particular pleasure to welcome Karel de Gucht, who, sad to say, I first came across more years ago than either of us would wish to remember, in another place — probably 20 years ago. I have seen all the contributions he has made in different incarnations since. I welcome him in this newer incarnation and thank him for his briefing.

The Security Council has increasingly recognized the role and importance of regional organizations. We have done that in the resolutions we have adopted, and I believe that what we heard this morning demonstrates the commonalities that exist between the aims of the United Nations on the one hand and those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on the other. If the Security Council has primary responsibility, which it does, for international peace and security, we actually have a shared interest — both of us and other regional organizations — in how, in practice, we tackle not just individual, actual conflicts, but in how we prepare and cope with generic issues associated with threats to international peace and security.

The Minister set out for us the three pillars of the OSCE. That rings so true with what is basic for the Security Council in approaching post-conflict situations. We need to tackle security-related, political, institutional and economic issues. He played back to us what Kofi Annan said in his report for the summit: that one cannot have security without development. We would say also, of course, that one cannot have development without security — the two concepts interlinked with that of the third pillar: human rights.

It is a truism for all of us that the rule of law and democratization are basic to that process and that they are much more than just the holding of elections. Elections are a symptom of the rule of law; up to a point, they may be the outcome of it. But elections in and of themselves are not enough without the creation of the conditions, the institutions and everything else that goes with the rule of law and the establishment of democratic societies.

That is why the contribution made by the OSCE in Kosovo was so important. It remains one of the key pillars of the efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) there. We — the United Nations, the European Union and the OSCE — have a shared interest in an outcome in Kosovo that addresses the whole question of the aspirations of the people and the need, at the same time, for regional stability, in a way that contributes to a peaceful outcome and does not actually cause disturbance or potential instability.

The Minister also brought up the question of the new challenges, which are not just for the Security Council and the United Nations — the whole United Nations family; terrorism, organized crime and so on are key issues. The fairly self-evident lesson is that for the United Nations and the OSCE, the need for enhanced cooperation and for working together in a practical manner is actually very important, not just to put in place the theory and the idea that, of course, there are links between us at a broad level, but in order to actually produce practical contributions whenever there is a need to do so.

He has set out a whole range of areas and situations. I can only agree with him and stress that one of the lessons of the last two years has been to understand fully to what extent regional cooperation, albeit under Chapter VIII or whatever other arrangement, with the United Nations and its family is basic to tackle these key issues wherever necessary. He has shown us today how that applies to the European continent. I think that the United Kingdom can only agree with him.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased to welcome here the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Mr. De Gucht, and we should like to thank him for his briefing.

On the whole, we agree with the approach taken by the Belgian chairmanship to structuring the work of the organization for 2006. Russia welcomes the decisions taken at the recent OSCE Ministerial Council, held in Ljubljana. The positive results obtained were due largely to the persistent efforts of the Slovenian chairmanship. We are convinced that the Belgian chairmanship will carry out its work in a similar manner. Russia is prepared very constructively to cooperate with the Belgian chairmanship, including building on the agreements reached at Ljubljana.

We support the all-round development and enhancement of cooperation between the United Nations and its Security Council and regional and subregional mechanisms on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular its Chapter VIII, duly taking into account the comparative advantages involved.

We note with satisfaction that, as a regional mechanism, the OSCE has established close and fruitful cooperation with the United Nations in a number of key areas, primarily with respect to security and to the resolution of regional conflicts.

I should like in particular to note the contribution made by the OSCE to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) on Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro. The OSCE mission in the province, which is part of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, is playing an important role in particular in monitoring, encouraging and promoting observance of human rights as well as monitoring the local media, and on the whole in introducing the standards adopted by the international community. This is particularly important at this time, in the light of the process that is now under way to determine the future status of Kosovo.

Important work in the area of political support provided by the United Nations is being done by the OSCE in the context of the Nagorny Karabakh settlement, where recently we have noted some positive progress. We hope that during the Belgian chairmanship, the OSCE will continue to facilitate the resolution of a number of other crises and conflicts in its area of competence in the framework of the division of labour that has developed with the United Nations.

Russia, for its part, will continue to support such efforts on the part of the OSCE.

In conclusion, allow me once again to wish the Belgian chairmanship every success in its work in this very difficult year of 2006.

Mr. Olson (United States of America): I will take the floor only briefly, just to welcome the Minister and to thank him for his very comprehensive briefing and assure him and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) of both my delegation and the Council's continued support in carrying out our entirely complementary agendas.

I would like to ask the Minister if he could provide just a little bit more information on the role he feels the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights could play in encouraging the growth of democratic institutions both in Europe and in Eurasia.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I, too, would like to welcome the statement by the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Foreign Minister of Belgium. As a member State of the OSCE, we welcome and endorse the priorities for the Belgian chairmanship in 2006. I particularly welcome the Minister's stress on the continued close cooperation with the United Nations in implementing priorities and, in particular, cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

I have the honour of chairing the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). In that capacity, I welcome the intention of the Chairman-in-Office to ensure continued and deepened cooperation between the OSCE and the CTC in the fight against terrorism. The cooperation between the OSCE and the CTC is, indeed, a model for the cooperation that the Committee is striving to establish with regional organizations in other areas of the world.

In conclusion, I welcome the enhanced focus of the Belgian chairmanship of the OSCE on the economic dimension. As the Minister and Chairman-in-Office knows, the United Nations has recently decided to establish a Peacebuilding Commission. I am confident that, in getting the work of the Peacebuilding Commission under way, the United Nations could be inspired by the work already undertaken by the OSCE in ensuring stabilization, democratization and development as the bases for sustainable peace. I therefore look forward to intensified cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations.

The President: I shall now make some remarks in my capacity as the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

I wish to join others in congratulating the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium, Mr. Karel de Gucht, on the assumption of the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and in thanking him for his briefing this morning. We also pay tribute to the outgoing Chairman, Mr. Dimitrij Rupel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, for his work while he was in office.

The OSCE is doing a commendable job in complementing the task of the United Nations of maintaining peace and security and in responding to threats to peace in the areas that fall under its mandate.

Although the Organization encountered many challenges last year, it responded to them in a professional and exemplary manner and prevented the further escalation of conflicts in Central Asia and the Caucuses. It also took on board the running of police development units, coordinated and implemented conventions and protocols on antiterrorism and addressed economic and environmental threats to security.

The priorities that the OSCE has set for itself during the Belgian chairmanship — which include the promotion of the rule of law, the penal systems, access to justice, combating international crime and a whole range of economic and political matters — are very high goals that, we are sure, the OSCE will fulfil to the best of its ability.

The activities of the OSCE are a great source of encouragement to other, similar organizations around the world to complement the objectives of the United Nations. Far us in Africa, it provides an example worth emulating in the areas of security, regional political institutions, human rights and development.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Karel de Gucht to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. De Gucht: First, I would like to thank all representatives that intervened in the debate for their support for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and for my country's chairmanship this year.

Slovakia had a question concerning the frozen conflict in Kosovo. With respect to frozen conflicts, the OSCE is certainly in the driver's seat with respect to South Ossetia. We hope that our initial judgement — that this frozen conflict may be ripe for treatment — is correct.

The same is probably true of Nagorno-Karabakh, where the OSCE is present through the Minsk Group. It is foreseen that the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan will meet in the course of February. Even before that meeting, I will go to the region and hold meetings with the Presidents of both countries to prepare their discussion.

The frozen conflict of Moldova-Transdniestria is very complicated. What the OSCE should attempt to do there is twofold. First, we should have a road map for how to include Transdniestria in a federal set-up of Moldova. Second, we should create the conditions that allow for the removal of all foreign troops from Transdniestrian soil.

As for Kosovo, the Security Council has appointed Mr. Martti Ahtisaari as the chief negotiator for the status of Kosovo. I have already met him, twice, and will continue to do so after my visit to the region later in February. We met on Friday in Vienna. Mr. Ahtisaari put a lot of emphasis on the role of the OSCE from now until an eventual agreement on status, as well as afterwards. In addition, in the intermediate period, the role of the OSCE will be very important, because it is the organization with the most representatives and the most people on the ground. We are represented down to the level of the smallest village in Kosovo and in those parts of Kosovo where the problem of the Serb minorities is very prominent. We are working very closely with Mr. Ahtisaari and his people. And we are of the opinion that it would be very welcome if the OSCE were given all the tools to fulfil that very important task.

With respect to frozen conflicts, there is not only the question of their resolution, as such. There is also the environment. In that connection, the economic dimension, for example, surfaces again. Cross-border cooperation and economic development are very important. That means that if those conflicts are to be resolved, the OSCE should be there for the long term to establish fully fledged modern societies in those regions.

Another question came from Greece, on the unequal treatment of the three baskets within the OSCE. That remark has been made repeatedly. I think it is to the benefit of the OSCE that we should try to re-equilibrate the relations between the three baskets. That is why we will strengthen OSCE action in the economic basket, also at the demand of several participating States with very concrete proposals such as the promotion of regional cooperation in the field of transportation. In particular, we would like to introduce the cooperation dynamics of the Stability Pact of the Balkans at the OSCE level.

Then there was a question by the representative of Argentina on the future role of the OSCE. The future role of the OSCE depends, of course, on the participating States, at least to the extent that they give us opportunities to play that role so that we will be in a position to do so. Sometimes there is hesitation. What we would like to do during our chairmanship-in-office is to create an environment that allows all participating States to cooperate fully within the OSCE. That also means that the OSCE should acquire more political prominence than was the case in the recent past.

With regard to the question by the representative of the United States of America regarding the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), we are of the opinion that the monitoring of elections is a very valuable contribution to peace, stability, modernization and democracy in the region. Recently, there has been much discussion on the role of ODIHR. That is why, by means of negotiations in Ljubljana, which took quite a long time, we came to an agreement on a road map for how to evaluate ODIHR in the year to come. On the basis of that document, ODIHR will present a self-evaluation and will put questions to all participating States. On the basis of that, a report will be elaborated that will be discussed openly at the next ministerial meeting, in Ljubljana. In preparing the discussion for that ministerial conference — which will in fact be centred on ODIHR and the chairmanship-in-office — I intend to create conditions that will give ODIHR every opportunity to carry out its very important task, as well as to strive to achieve a consensus among all participating States on how to put this into practice effectively.

The President: I thank Mr. De Gucht for the clarifications he has provided.

Once again, I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium for having come to brief the Security Council this morning.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.